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Evaluation

Annual report on evaluation in UNDP in 2007

Summary

The present annual report covers the period between March 2007 and February 2008. Chapter 1 presents information on evaluation coverage; compliance; quality; institutional arrangements; and the way evaluations are used. It highlights systemic constraints to effective implementation of the evaluation policy. The chapter on the evaluation function concludes with a brief update on the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG).

Drawing from evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office and the associated funds and programmes, chapter 2 presents key findings, recurring issues and lessons for organizational learning. The last chapter proposes the 2008-2009 programme of work for the Evaluation Office for review and approval by the Executive Board.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to (a) take note of the report; (b) request UNDP to address issues as raised by evaluation; (c) request UNDP to strengthen decentralized evaluation capacity and use; (d) request UNDP to support national evaluation capacity development; and (e) approve the 2008-2009 programme of work proposed by the Evaluation Office.

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I. The evaluation function

1. Since the adoption of the evaluation policy in 2006, its guiding principles and norms have gained a firm foothold in UNDP. The independence of the Evaluation Office is exercised in the development of its programme of work, conduct and issuance of its evaluation reports without internal clearance by UNDP management. During the reporting period, UNDP senior management was committed to using evaluations effectively in their decision-making. Those efforts were recognized in an independent assessment of the UNDP evaluation policy and practice in the 2007 *Global Accountability Report* by the One World Trust[1]. Benchmarking against established good-practice principles of partnership engagement, the use of evaluation in decision-making and full disclosure of findings, the report ranked UNDP second in terms of evaluation among 10 intergovernmental organizations that were assessed.

A. The UNDP Evaluation Office and evaluation units in the associated funds and programmes

Coverage

2. The Evaluation Office conducts independent evaluations to improve and account for programme results. These evaluations seek to provide sufficient information on global, regional and country programmes presented to the Executive Board and on cross-cutting themes of organizational importance.

3. Following the approval of the 2007-2008 programme of work, the Evaluation Office conducted nine evaluations during the reporting period. Four country programme evaluations or assessments of development results, in Benin, Congo Brazzaville, Ecuador and Rwanda, were conducted prior to their new programmes. The evaluation of the third cooperation framework for South-South cooperation was undertaken to provide inputs to the new framework.

4. The evaluation of the role of UNDP in the net contributor countries in the Arab Region was conducted to inform UNDP on its evolving role in those countries. The engagement of UNDP in new aid modalities was examined through the joint evaluation of the UNDG contribution to implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The evaluation of results-based management at UNDP took stock of its experiences in results-based approaches to provide feedback to the development of the new strategic plan. The joint evaluation of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) assessed the effectiveness of community-based approaches in the area of energy and environment, which had implications for the 'downstream' efforts of UNDP in other practice areas.

[1] The One World Trust is a non-governmental organization that seeks to generate wider commitment to transparency and accountability in international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

5. During the reporting period, the Evaluation Office conducted four joint evaluations. Mandated by the GEF Council, the evaluation of the GEF-SGP was conducted jointly with the GEF Evaluation Office. That evaluation and its management response were presented to the GEF Council meeting in November 2007. The Council assigned a working group, convened by UNDP, to respond to the evaluation. Other joint evaluations included: the first phase of the joint evaluation of the UNDG contribution to the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; the evaluation of the eight 'delivering as one' pilots; and the ongoing country-led joint evaluation with the Government of South Africa.

6. The Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) commissioned eight mandatory evaluations of its local development programmes in 2007, including two midterm evaluations, in Ethiopia and Rwanda, and six final evaluations, in Benin, Guinea, Malawi, Senegal, Uganda and Yemen. Seven of those evaluations were conducted through a pilot 'outsourced' arrangement, while the evaluation of the Yemen programme was organized by the Evaluation Unit directly.

7. The Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) conducted two evaluations: the evaluations of its multi-year funding framework (MYFF) system for 2004-2007 and of its programme to strengthen women's leadership in rebuilding Afghanistan.

8. The Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme used its capacity to develop monitoring and evaluation support tools, setting the ground for future evaluations, to implement thematic 'volunteerism for development results' workshops, and to prepare the 2008 report of the Administrator on UNV. A planned joint thematic evaluation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was postponed due to the overwhelming surge in the peacekeeping arena.

Quality

9. The UNDP Evaluation Office recognized the importance of maintaining and improving the quality of independent evaluations. Areas for improvement include timeliness and focus on accountability. Evaluations have not always been timed to provide inputs to programme design and decision-making, as in the case of the evaluations of South-South cooperation and results-based management. In future, all assessments of development results will be completed prior the development of new country programme documents. Thematic evaluations will be closely aligned with the strategic plan so as to inform decision-making in a timely manner.

10. The peer review of the Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted by the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in 2005, noted that independent evaluations were 'goal free' and focused more on learning than accountability. Following that review, the Evaluation Office enhanced its accountability focus by applying benchmarks and examining the efficiency of achieving expected results.

11. Despite those efforts, the lack of clearly defined results and sufficient outcome monitoring and evaluation at the decentralized level continued to pose challenges. Further, due to the lack of hard quantitative evidence, the Evaluation Office had to rely heavily, at times, on qualitative judgments and benchmarks established by evaluators. Another challenge was to ensure balance in terms of gender and North-South representation in evaluation teams and advisory panels. Despite efforts made by the Evaluation Office, it was not always possible to have a balanced composition.

12. The associated funds and programmes made efforts in the methodological advancement of their work. As an integral part of the outsourcing experiment, UNCDF developed an evaluation manual for team leaders to clarify core evaluation questions and a common methodology. For its part, UNV used elements of a methodology developed in 2006 to assess the contribution of volunteering to development in a series of thematic results workshops. In the workshops, the UNV analysis of achievements, challenges and lessons was validated by a wide range of stakeholders and subject-matter experts. Workshop findings are now used for reporting, corporate learning and strategic planning. UNV developed a draft project-level indicator framework that complements the corporate framework to facilitate project design, monitoring and evaluation.

Institutional arrangements

13. The evaluation policy defined the roles and responsibilities of key constituents of the organization in evaluation. In compliance with the requirement of the policy, the independent evaluation function of UNDP has been secured with a predictable resource base from the core budget. In 2007, the Executive Board endorsed the extension of the second and final tenure of the incumbent Director of the Evaluation Office, as prescribed by the evaluation policy.

14. The work of the UNDP Evaluation Office in 2007 was supported by 20 staff members and a core programme budget of $4.3 million. With an expanded work programme for 2008-2009, the biennial support budget provided for the recruitment of six additional staff members. Resources for programmatic evaluations of the global, regional and the South-South cooperation frameworks are made available by the respective programmes.

15. During the reporting period, the UNV Evaluation Unit operated with four staff members, and the budget allocated to corporate evaluation and performance measurement activities amounted to $154,000.

16. The UNCDF Evaluation Unit was expanded in the reporting year, and now comprises two staff members. Mandatory project evaluations are funded directly from the relevant project budgets. UNCDF would like to increase the number of joint evaluations to ensure the participation of key donor and national partners. The use of national expertise in project evaluation continued to be a priority for UNCDF. In Malawi, for example, UNCDF used the services of consultants from the private sector and the national university.

Thematic, strategic and outcome evaluations were funded from other corporate resources.

17. In 2007, UNIFEM established its first independent Evaluation Unit, headed by a senior staff member. Recruitment of an additional staff member is under way. In December 2007, an $850,000 project was approved to provide a central fund for the work of the Evaluation Unit.

18. UNIFEM is drafting a corporate evaluation strategy to support its strategic plan, 2008-2011, and to strengthen its evaluation function. Based on the key issues and challenges identified through the internal consultative process, the focus of the strategy is: (a) ensuring a critical mass of high-quality evaluations and their use to enhance catalytic UNIFEM programming; (b) building evaluation capacity among UNIFEM staff and partners; and (c) engaging in broader United Nations evaluation processes, including the work of UNEG.

Support to implementation of the evaluation policy

19. As custodians of the evaluation function, the UNDP Evaluation Office and evaluation units in the associated funds and programmes continued to support the effective implementation of the evaluation policy by all parts of the organization.

20. The Evaluation Office revised the operational guidelines for evaluation in the new *Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures* to promote good evaluation practices in UNDP programmes and projects. Through active participation in the task force that developed the *Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures*, the Evaluation Office ensured the inclusion of requisite procedures, principles and quality standards for evaluation throughout the UNDP programming cycle.

21. To complement the *Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures*, the Evaluation Office is finalizing the revision of the *Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluation for Results* to reflect the requirements and principles of the evaluation policy, and the UNEG *Standards for Evaluation in the UN system* (2005). The revised handbook provides UNDP staff, evaluators and partners with tools, techniques and references in evaluation planning, conduct and use, emphasizing national ownership and use of evaluations to improve UNDP effectiveness.

22. Since the launch of the revamped online information management system – the Evaluation Resource Centre[2] – in 2006, the Evaluation Office has introduced new features to enhance its usefulness as a tool for management accountability in evaluation. For instance, to facilitate the work of the regional bureaux in overseeing country office evaluations, the Evaluation Office developed a reporting tool. Based on queries received by UNDP in the past year, a list of 'frequently asked questions' http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/erc/faq.htmlwas compiled to enhance the utility of the system.

[2] The Evaluation Resource Centre (erc.undp.org) is a public information management system, which provides information on evaluation plans and management responses in a timely manner.

23. Information on evaluation planning and management response in the Evaluation Resource Centre has been adopted in the UNDP management tools and systems, such as the online results-based management platform. Further, the Evaluation Office provided substantive input to the UNDP accountability framework to reflect the role of evaluation in supporting accountability at the country and corporate levels, and to clarify oversight responsibilities.

24. In line with the evaluation policy requirement for the public disclosure of all UNDP evaluations, the Evaluation Resource Centre serves as the public database of evaluation reports. The database contains over 800 reports and 270 sets of terms of reference, representing a steady increase over the year. The Evaluation Office worked closely with the associated funds and programmes to customize the Evaluation Resource Centre to meet their specific requirements for evaluation planning, use, and disclosure. UNV and UNCDF evaluations are already available in the database. Final preparations are under way for including UNIFEM evaluations.

25. To support the quality enhancement of decentralized evaluations, the Evaluation Office developed quality criteria and scoring tools in line with the *United Nations Evaluation Group standards for evaluation in the United Nations system*. The Evaluation Office applied those quality criteria, on a pilot basis, to assess a sample of 18 outcome evaluations commissioned in 2007. The analysis of that assessment is presented in paragraphs 44-46, below. Follow-up activities will be undertaken to validate the usefulness of these instruments through a consultative process and to apply them in assessing the quality of all mandatory decentralized evaluations, including the GEF terminal evaluations.

26. The Evaluation Office provided advisory services, such as the review of draft terms of reference and the identification of evaluators, on an as-requested basis. Support was extended to the regional bureaux in their oversight responsibility for country office evaluations. The Evaluation Office delivered periodic sessions on evaluation for more than 200 UNDP staff members across the organization.

27. Under the work of UNEG, the Evaluation Office supported the design and delivery of the introductory course on evaluation pertinent to the United Nations system. To date, 200 United Nations staff and partner governments have participated in five pilots during the reporting period. Twenty of the participants were programme officers and evaluation specialists in UNDP. Building on partnership with UNEG in this area, the Evaluation Office will be developing an online course on evaluation for managers and specialists.

28. The associated funds and programme intensified their support to developing the capacity of their respective programme units. For example, the UNIFEM Evaluation Unit established a more systematic approach to providing managers of a few selected decentralized evaluations with guidance and support. Similarly, the UNV Evaluation Unit provided on-the-job monitoring and evaluation capacity development by providing support to the

development of terms of reference for evaluation, commenting on draft evaluation reports; commenting on draft project documents and working with UNV programme staff on monitoring and evaluation frameworks for new projects; and providing monitoring and evaluation training to field staff. The UNCDF Evaluation Unit participated regularly in the Project Appraisal Committee to comment on the quality of the results and resource frameworks and proposed evaluation arrangements.

Partnerships

29. UNDP and its associated funds and programmes continued to build on professional partnerships in evaluation with UNEG, the OECD-DAC Network on Evaluation, other evaluation networks, and bilateral and multilateral partners.

30. In 2007, the Evaluation Office reinforced its partnerships through the increased conduct of joint evaluations: evaluations of the UNDG contribution to the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; the 'delivering as one' pilots; and with the Government of South Africa. The Evaluation Office has been an active member of the management group of the evaluation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, a joint evaluation with partner countries and OECD-DAC.

31. In addition to conducting joint evaluations, the Evaluation Office was engaged in substantive partnerships for the advancement of evaluation. Through the 'Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation', the Evaluation Office contributed to enhanced harmonization and quality in impact evaluation at the global level, by supporting the development of impact evaluation guidance; a programme for coordination and collaboration on impact evaluation; and a resource platform for sharing information on the subject. UNDP served as a co-coordinator of a group focusing on alternative approaches and methods to evaluate the impact of complex situations in development work, and provided financial and technical assistance to engage high-level experts for an accurate understanding of impact evaluation.

32. The Evaluation Office continued to engage with national and regional evaluation associations. For the third time, the Evaluation Office is contributing to the delivery of the 2008 conference organized by the Malaysian Evaluation Association for evaluators and associations in the Asia Region. In view of the growing number of national evaluation associations, the Evaluation Office recognizes the need to work closely with them for mutual learning, and to support their capacity development when needed. Concerted efforts will be made to involve national institutions and consultants from the South in the conduct of independent evaluations where opportunities arise.

33. Bilateral partnerships with the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation provided support to the expanded work of the Evaluation Office. Ongoing work on methodological advancement, knowledge sharing and management, and capacity development, was made possible through their untied financial contributions.

B. Programme units

34. Decentralized evaluations by programme units promote partnerships in evaluation and learning from the past for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation, and future planning. They also support oversight and substantive accountability to national stakeholders. To ensure adequate programme coverage by credible evaluations and their use, programme units are required to develop an evaluation plan for the programme period, commission planned evaluations to external evaluators, and prepare management responses. Managers of the units are responsible for ensuring the quality of evaluations and adequate institutional arrangements (human and financial resources) to commission them. The year 2007 witnessed a significant increase in institutional capacity at the decentralized level. It is hoped that the rigorous application of standards and oversight will improve the quality of the evaluation function at the decentralized level.

Coverage

35. Programme units commission two main types of decentralized evaluations: outcome and project evaluations. During the reporting period, 186 evaluations[3] were completed, including two by the regional bureau and one by the Bureau for Development Policy (see annex posted on the Executive Board web page). This is similar to the previous year, with 191 evaluations.

36. At the country level, UNDP offices in 137[4] countries completed 183 evaluations, again comparable to the previous year (184). As in the previous year, most of them were project evaluations (138), whereas only 28 were outcome evaluations, representing 15 per cent of total evaluations (see table 1).

[3] As in the previous year, the Evaluation Office used the data in the Evaluation Resource Centre, which is based on the actual number of evaluation reports uploaded by responsible units as completed evaluations.

[4] This includes three sub-offices.

Table 1. Completed evaluations in country offices between March 2007 and February 2008

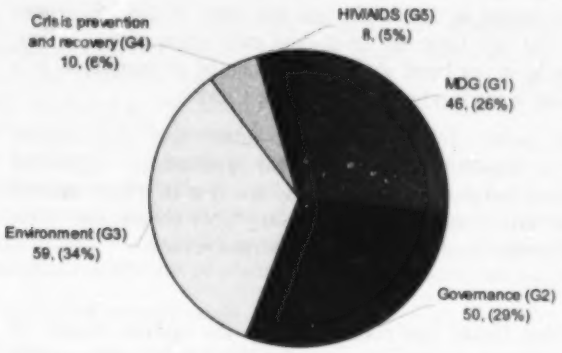
		Global (137)	Regions (No. of countries)				
			Africa (45)	Asia and the Pacific (24)	Arab States (18)	Europe and the CIS (25)	Latin America and the Caribbean (25)
1	Total number of all evaluations in 2007	183	39	45	32	35	32
2	Of which project evaluations	137	30	36	25	24	22
3	Of which outcome evaluations	28	3	7	4	6	8
4	Of which other evaluations	18	6	2	3	5	2
5	Percentage of *outcome* evaluations in total evaluations	15%	8%	16%	13%	17%	25%
6	Percentage of countries with at least one evaluation of *any type*	51%	38%	79%	39%	62%	48%
7	Percentage of countries with at least one *outcome* evaluation	14%	7%	21%	11%	15%	24%
8	Average no. of evaluations per country	1.33	0.87	1.88	1.78	1.35	1.28
9	Average number of evaluations per country that conducted at least one evaluation of *any type*	2.61	2.29	2.37	4.57	2.19	2.67

37. Fifty-one per cent of county offices conducted at least one evaluation of any type. This represents a slight increase from 48 per cent in 2006. Asia and the Pacific had the highest percentage (79 per cent) of countries with any evaluation, and Africa had the lowest percentage (38 per cent). Latin America and the Caribbean had the highest percentage (24 per cent) of countries in the region with at least one outcome evaluation in 2007, while Africa had the lowest (7 per cent).

38. As in 2006, there was a noticeable variation in the average number of evaluations per country. Asia and the Pacific had the highest (1.88) and Africa had the lowest (0.87). The variation in the average number of evaluations was even greater among those with at least one evaluation of any type. It ranged from 2.19 in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to 4.57 in the Arab States.

39. The thematic coverage of evaluations of any type continued to correspond with resources allocations in UNDP, with more than half of decentralized evaluations focusing on MYFF goals 1 and 2, "achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty" and "fostering democratic governance" (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Thematic coverage by 173* evaluations of any type at the country level in 2007



*This excludes 10 cross-thematic evaluations.

40. *Evaluation compliance*: The conduct of outcome evaluations as outlined in the plan provides the basis for evaluation compliance for country offices.[5] Of the 36 countries whose programme cycles ended in 2007, 10 did not plan any outcome evaluations for the cycle. Of the 26 countries that planned outcome evaluations, 12 completed the requisite number; four complied partially, having conducted at least one but not the required number; and 10 did not conduct any planned outcome evaluations (see table 2).

Table 2. Outcome evaluation compliance in 2007

Region (No. of county programmes ending in 2007)	Compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant
Africa (8)	3	2	3
Asia and the Pacific (7)	4	1	2
Arab States (5)	2	0	3
Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (1)	1	0	0
Latin America and the Caribbean (5)	2	1	2
Global (26)	12	4	10

*This excludes 10 country offices that did not plan any outcome evaluation

41. All 36 country offices that had submitted new country programme documents to the Executive Board during the reporting period met the requirement of submitting an evaluation plan. Evidence suggests that as the development of the plan became an integral part of the country programme document, the involvement of national stakeholders in the planning process increased. That involvement is critical to enhancing the ownership and alignment of planned evaluations with national priorities.

42. While the submission requirement has been met, increased oversight is required to ensure the quality and implementation of the plans. Some country offices did not plan any outcome

[5] Prior to the approval of the evaluation policy, the number of planned outcome evaluations was determined by the budget size of the programme (including the option of not conducting any). The new evaluation policy requires all programme units to conduct at least one outcome evaluation.

evaluations or indicate required resources for evaluations. Others planned an over-ambitious number of outcome evaluations. The country office audits conducted in 2007 revealed that nine of the 25 country offices audited did not have an up-to-date evaluation plan. Further, evaluation plans have not been always implemented or monitored in a systematic manner in the Evaluation Resource Centre.

43. Programme units of the associated funds and programmes commissioned a number of decentralized evaluations. UNIFEM subregional offices completed seven evaluations, four of which were of projects in post crisis or conflict situations. UNV programme units completed three project evaluations and one project review.

Quality

44. The Executive Board has commented on the uneven quality of decentralized evaluations as an area of concern. As a step towards addressing that issue, the Evaluation Office conducted a pilot quality assessment of 18 outcome evaluations that were completed in 2007. The assessment concluded that 34 per cent of the reports were moderately to highly satisfactory, while 66 per cent of the reports were less than satisfactory. Analysis of the ratings relative to each criterion assessed suggests that the evaluation reports are weakest in terms of evaluation design and methodology, followed by findings and conclusions. Reports are strongest on report structure and clarity and evaluation purpose and context (see table 3).

Table 3. Summary of report ratings by quality criteria[6]

Rating	Overall	Quality criteria						
		Report structure and presentation	*Evaluation subject and context*	*Evaluation objectives and criteria*	*Evaluation design and methodology*	*Findings*	*Conclusions*	*Recommendations and lessons*
Highly satisfactory	3 (17%)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	3 (17%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	3 (17%)	2 (11%)
Satisfactory	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	2 (11%)
Moderately satisfactory	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	5 (28%)
Moderately unsatisfactory	2 (11%)	6 (33%)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	3 (17%)	1 (6%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)
Unsatisfactory	8 (44%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	4 (22%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	5 (28%)	1 (6%)
Highly unsatisfactory	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	9 (50%)	6 (33%)	3 (17%)	6 (33%)

45. Seventy-two per cent of the reports were rated less than satisfactory on the criterion on the quality of evaluation design and methodology. Although most reports identified data sources, they did not appear to have been based on well-thought-out evaluation approach and design, lacking a clear rationale for their approach to answering the evaluation questions. In terms of the criterion related to findings, 78 per cent of the

[6] The table presents the number and percentage of reports by rating received for each quality criterion (eighteen reports were reviewed).

reports described findings without citing the data or other objective information as supporting evidence.

46. The pilot quality assessment revealed that, although poor evaluation design is a critical element in report quality, other external factors also have an influence; notably: the quality of the project design, reporting and monitoring; the clarify and comprehensiveness of the terms of reference; and the resources (time and budget) made available to the evaluation. UNDP needs to exercise increased oversight to address these operating constraints. The pilot also provided valuable inputs to the revisions to guidelines and the handbook. In particular, as the pilot highlighted, the Evaluation Office is addressing the need to detail the essential components of evaluation design and methodology.

Institutional arrangements

47. To assess the monitoring and evaluation practices in UNDP programme units, the Evaluation Office conducted a survey in which 118 country offices and six headquarters-based units participated (an 82 per cent response rate). The survey revealed notable efforts made by UNDP country offices in professionalizing the monitoring and evaluation function. Over the past year, the number of dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialists[7] across UNDP increased from 23 to 38. Of those, 57 per cent supported the United Nations country team at the level of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); 83 per cent at the level of the country programme; and 38 per cent in the context of a particular project or trust fund.[8] The prevalence of monitoring and evaluation officers working at the UNDAF level revealed the increased United Nations system-wide collaboration in monitoring and evaluation at the country level. Such an arrangement was regarded by the respondents as ideal for small offices.

48. The number of country offices with a unit that supports planning, monitoring and evaluation and/or results management increased from 10 to 30. Of those, three country offices – in Guatemala, Nepal and Peru – had units dedicated solely to monitoring and evaluation. The cross-regional analysis reveals that the availability of monitoring and evaluation officers and units was highest in the Asia and the Pacific region and lowest in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region (see table 4).

Table 4: Evaluation capacity in country offices in 2007

Regions (survey response rate per region)[1]	Africa (76%)	Asia and the Pacific (100%)	Arab States (72%)	Europe and the CIS (81%)	Latin America and the Caribbean (81%)	Global (82%)
No. and % of dedicated M&E specialists in total country offices per region	8 (18%)	11 (46%)	6 (33%)	1 (4%)	12 (46%)	38 (28%)
No. and % of M&E units in total country offices per region	7 (16%)	11 (46%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	10 (38%)	30 (22%)

M&E = monitoring and evaluation

[7] Almost all offices had an evaluation focal point; however, the focal points often lacked a clear mandate and requisite expertise.

[8] These responsibilities are not mutually exclusive.

49. As regional-level demand rises for advisory services in results-based planning, the regional bureaux have demonstrated their commitment to establishing a dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialist or adviser post in the regions. However, the Arab States region is the only one with such a post to date. The Africa region is recruiting two senior evaluation advisers for its regional centres in Dakar and Johannesburg and one for the Regional Bureau for Africa at headquarters. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is deploying an evaluation adviser in the Sub-regional Resource Facility in Panama. Other regions have no concrete plan to establish a post.

50. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery has a specialist to develop and operationalize a monitoring and evaluation system for the bureau and support county offices in enhancing monitoring and evaluation within their crisis prevention and recovery programmes.

51. Country offices continued to face difficulties in securing adequate evaluation resources. Identifying resources, particularly for outcome evaluations, in which the contribution of a number of related projects to particular outcomes is assessed, is difficult when those projects are financed by different partners. Projects involving cost-sharing with donors often require project evaluations. The revised standard cost-sharing agreements now include a clause on evaluation to reflect the guiding principles of the evaluation policy. This should enable UNDP and its partners to understand better the value of programmatic and outcome evaluations.

52. As demonstrated by the increased number of specialists and units, country offices have made considerable efforts to enhance their monitoring and evaluation capacity. However, the independent evaluation of results-based management at UNDP, as well as the survey findings, indicated that UNDP needs to strengthen its culture of results. The monitoring and evaluation aspect is often regarded as an additional burden and the responsibility of a dedicated officer or senior managers, rather than as an integral part of the day-to-day work of programme/project officers. Support for monitoring and evaluation from senior managers is sometimes inadequate, as greater emphasis has been placed on financial, rather than results-related, delivery. Many country offices continue to face challenges such as the absence of monitoring and evaluation expertise; difficulties in linking monitoring and evaluation with learning; substandard quality of programme/project design; and a limited understanding of corporate monitoring and evaluation tools and their application[9]. Those areas require attention from UNDP management at the corporate and decentralized levels.

C. National evaluation capacity development

53. There has been a growing demand for UNDP to support national evaluation capacity development. A number of UNDP country offices responded by providing training and technical assistance in developing and managing national systems for monitoring and evaluating national development strategies, such as poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals. In Bangladesh, UNDP provided support to strengthen the capacity of government counterparts to track and

[9]These observations are made by the survey respondents.

monitor progress in those areas, estimate the costs of achieving the targets, and link those costs with the national budget and the medium-term budgetary frameworks. In Ethiopia, UNDP supported the central statistics authority in establishing a comprehensive database to monitor progress on development outcomes based on the national development plan. Others contributed by providing technical support in the design and conduct of policy evaluations. In Chile, for example, UNDP provided the Ministry of Planning with technical support in designing an impact evaluation of its universal early child-development programme.

54. At the regional level, regional capacity development advisers in the UNDP regional centres also supported national governments in the area of monitoring and evaluation capacity development. In Jordan, for instance, the capacity development team based in Beirut initiated a capacity needs assessment for issues related to planning and monitoring the MDGs through an ongoing project. The team helped the Government to identify key performance indicators and baselines; formulated training materials in monitoring and evaluation; delivered training to all line ministries; and supported the evaluations of projects and the documentation of lessons learned and best practices.

55. Through its contribution to UNEG training programmes, the Evaluation Office contributed to national capacity development and ownership of evaluation. Over 70 government and national partners have so far benefited from the programmes.

D. Use of evaluation

56. Following the implementation of the evaluation policy, there has been a steady increase in the UNDP commitment to using evaluation to increase accountability, informed decision-making and learning. Particularly at the corporate level, UNDP management continued to use independent evaluations for informed decision-making. UNDP management has systematically reviewed and discussed key evaluation findings and recommendations. In developing its strategic plan, 2008-2011, UNDP drew lessons from past independent evaluations such as the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP (2006) and the evaluation of UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries (2007) to enhance the strategic focus. In order to address a number of problematic issues with outcome monitoring and reporting in UNDP, as highlighted in the evaluation of results-based management, the development of enhanced guidance on planning and monitoring at the outcome-level has been initiated across the organization.

57. Experience shows that where the Executive Board adopted decisions on independent evaluations, it has resulted in more systematic follow-up by the organization. The evaluations of the second regional cooperation frameworks (2007), the national human development report (2007), and the contribution of UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries (2007), are examples. In particular, as follow-up to the decision on the evaluation of the gender mainstreaming in UNDP (2006), the Administrator established the 'Gender Steering and Implementation Committee' to review progress on the gender action plan, 2006-2007, and the allocation of core resources for its implementation. UNDP recently launched a new gender strategy, which builds on the gender action plan, to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

58. The evaluation policy requires a management response to all evaluations. UNDP management has demonstrated its commitment to the systematic presentation of management responses to independent evaluations. There is now a streamlined process of developing a management response to independent evaluations, including a time frame and roles and responsibilities. Despite those efforts, five of 15 independent evaluations completed in 2006 do not have a management response entered or tracked in the Evaluation Resource Centre. Neither has the preparation of and follow-up to management responses to joint evaluations been done in a systematic manner. At the decentralized level, concerted efforts are required to institutionalize the management response system. Only 20 per cent of all evaluations completed during the reporting year had a management response in the Evaluation Resource Centre. UNDP managers at different levels need to utilize the Evaluation Resource Centre effectively for oversight.

59. The associated funds and programmes are developing similar management response mechanisms. The UNIFEM Evaluation Unit worked with different units to ensure the systematic preparation of management responses. The UNV Evaluation Unit is holding a dialogue with senior managers to raise awareness and bring about the institutionalization of the system. UNCDF is also identifying operational mechanisms to institute the management response system.

60. In terms of the use of independent evaluation findings and recommendations in programming, programme units have been effective, as evidenced by the programme documents submitted to the Executive Board during the reporting period. For example, in response to the common recommendation regarding the need for a greater focus on fewer projects and outcomes, the regional programmes for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa have reduced the number of areas and tightened the focus. Similarly, a number of new country programme documents, including those for Bhutan and Colombia, thoroughly reflected the assessment of development results findings in the programme design.

61. In its support of evaluation knowledge sharing, the Evaluation Office continued to manage its knowledge network (EvalNet). At its five-year mark, the membership had increased by 17 per cent from the previous year to 1,400. Active discussions took place on topics including the use of evaluation for decision-making, knowledge products and monitoring and evaluation systems in country offices. An evaluation brief, featuring the three evaluations of the second regional cooperation frameworks, was developed to enhance the accessibility of the evaluation information. The network hosted the first ever e-discussion on follow-up to an independent evaluation. It featured the evaluation of the national human development report system and generated many ideas on how to better leverage its potential.

E. Collaboration with the United Nations Evaluation Group

62. UNEG is a professional network of the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations system. It has 43 members at present. UNDP continued to contribute as an active member, and has benefited greatly from its partnership with UNEG in its efforts to strengthen the evaluation function in UNDP.

63. In April 2007 UNEG adopted its 'principles of working together', which defined its mission statement and strategic approach; guidelines on membership; governance arrangements; and modus operandi. The Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office serves as the first elected Chair of UNEG. The principles also formally entrusted UNDP with the responsibility of hosting the UNEG secretariat as well as assuming the role of the UNEG Executive Coordinator to manage the secretariat. The UNEG work programme between April 2007 and March 2008 focused on three areas: United Nations reform and evaluation; the evaluation function; and professionalizing evaluation. The work programme is implemented by task forces and working groups.

64. In the area of United Nations reform and evaluation, the Chief Executives Board requested UNEG to initiate the first phase of the evaluation of the pilots for 'delivering as one'. The evaluability study, drawing on all eight pilot experiencies, will be completed in May 2008.

65. The Government of South Africa requested UNEG to conduct a joint evaluation of the effectiveness and contribution of the United Nations system to long-term development in South Africa. The scoping mission, in February 2008, resulted in comprehensive terms of reference for the joint evaluation. The evaluation, to be completed by end 2008, should provide lessons to guide future nationally led evaluations and serve as a model whereby UNEG collaborates with national institutions to share responsibility and ownership for evaluation.

66. To strengthen the evaluation function in the United Nations system, UNEG has developed a code of conduct and guidelines to harmonize evaluation methodology. UNIFEM co-chaired the task force on human rights and gender equality, and identified good practices of United Nations organizations, bilateral institutions and international NGOs in this area and highlighted remaining gaps. That exercise led to a concept note and an annotated outline for the guidance presented at the UNEG annual meeting in April 2008. UNCDF co-chaired the task force on defining the evaluation function in relation to other management and oversight functions.

67. In setting quality and best practice standards for evaluation based on the experience of UNEG members, the task force on evaluation practice exchange provided a forum for the exchange of experiences in substantive areas. In the 2007 evaluation practice exchange seminar, UNDP and UNIFEM made presentations on the use of evaluation and management response systems to promote systematic and effective use of evaluation across the United Nations system. UNV presented its new methodology to assess the contribution of volunteering to development.

68. In advancing the professionalization of evaluation, the task force on evaluation capacity development has developed core competencies and job descriptions for evaluators in the United Nations system. It also defined a comprehensive training programme on evaluation pertinent to the United Nations system to enhance common approaches and methodology across organizations. In partnership with the United Nations Staff College, UNEG piloted the introduction course of this programme in Amman, Bangkok, Kigali and Turin during the reporting period.

II. Key findings and lessons learned from the evaluations

69. The following findings are based on the evidence emerging from the seven independent evaluations[10] and the evaluations conducted by the associated funds and programmes during the reporting year.

A. Leveraging the comparative advantages of UNDP

70. The comparative advantages of UNDP are seen as its ability to bring partners together and its universal presence. The assessments of development results confirmed that those advantages enabled UNDP to establish relationships with a wide range of national and international actors and to play a useful role in advocacy, facilitation and coordination. The evaluation of the role of UNDP in the net contributor countries of the Arab region shows that the major role for UNDP is to provide a window for these countries to access the diverse expertise in the United Nations system, especially where the relevant organizations are not resident.

71. The evaluation pointed to the need for UNDP to develop clear strategies to engage proactively with countries that are playing an increasingly important role in the rapidly evolving area of global development assistance. That evaluation, and the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to South-South cooperation, showed that the capacity of country offices to respond to this need varies. UNDP has not developed a robust strategy at the corporate level to utilize its universal presence in support of South-South cooperation in helping countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

72. UNDP efforts to support better coordination within the United Nations system at the country level have been noted by all evaluations. The South-South cooperation evaluation and the evaluation of the UNDG contribution to the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness point to the limited results attained by UNDP in this area. The assessment of development results for Rwanda found that in the context of the 'delivering as one' pilot in that country, UNDP needs to be clear about the role it is playing in every context where it intervenes – whether it is as a facilitator, coordinator, implementing agency, or advocate. The evaluation showed that within the United Nations country team, UNDP had effectively led the UNDAF work for enhanced coordination in programming and had aligned development assistance with national priorities.

B. Leveraging UNDP experience in promoting sustainable human development

73. Evaluations have found that UNDP does not fully utilize the stock of development knowledge acquired through its universal presence. The practice networks provide a valuable platform for country offices to find solutions to specific problems in a timely manner. The evaluation of the GEF-SGP demonstrated that there is considerable exchange of experience among UNDP offices. However, as the South-South cooperation

[10] The assessments of development results for Benin and the Republic of the Congo are not included as they are being finalized.

evaluation noted, no systematic effort exists to go beyond addressing individual challenges as they arise, or to codify this stock of knowledge, assess emerging demands and disseminate lessons learned throughout the organization.

74. Inadequate regular resources restricted the ability of UNDP to pursue core activities related to its priorities. The South-South cooperation evaluation illustrates this through the example of the International Poverty Center in Brasilia, which was prevented by inadequate resources from fully implementing its agenda to support South-South cooperation.

75. The evaluations stressed that efforts to mobilize resources should not detract from strategic focus. While recognizing the importance of raising resources for the organization, UNDP should also continue to build its capacity in its core areas of competence. When UNDP played the role of administrative service provider for national or local governments, as was pointed out in the assessment of development results for Ecuador, inadequate attention was paid to sustained development of national capacity and to the substantive capacity of UNDP itself.

C. Engaging with local and national partners

76. Capacity development initiatives continue to be central to the efforts of UNDP, but its contribution to strengthening local capacities has been mixed.

77. In some countries UNDP has worked with governments to enhance national capacities, while in many others it has set up parallel systems without aligning them with those of other development partners within the country, or with those of the government. Projects are often developed without a capacity development dimension or long-term and follow-up support to ensure the sustainability of the capacities developed. As pointed out in the Paris Declaration evaluation, UNDP continues to use project implementation units to implement its initiatives, particularly in procurement. While these units contribute to attaining results in the short term, they reduce national ownership and inhibit the longer-term strengthening of national capacities. The evaluation points to the need for UNDP to harmonize its approach to strengthening national capacities with other members of UNDG and other development partners. Those messages are reiterated in the results-based management and the Paris Declaration evaluations, which call on UNDP to focus its capacity development initiatives on enhancing existing national capacities and systems in a sustained manner, as opposed to building parallel structures.

78. UNDP partnership and engagement with governments is generally strong. However, partnerships with the private sector and with civil society were often found to be weak or not fully used. In the Arab net contributor countries, it was found that increased partnership with the private sector is critical since the sector has an important role in addressing many of the development challenges faced by these countries, such as creating jobs or addressing environmental concerns. While recognizing that UNDP partnerships with civil society and the private sector can be feasible only with government support, clear strategies to promote national partnerships among the government, civil society organizations and the private sector were weak. Facilitating such

partnerships is an important aspect of the work of UNDP in promoting human development.

79. The evaluations in UNV concluded that UNV supported activities with a strong impact on communities. For example, in Sierra Leone, locally recruited UNV volunteers worked and lived within communities, and built relationships of confidence and trust with stakeholders at a variety of levels, representing a critical link between communities at the grass roots and United Nations development organizations. Considering the increasing focus on influencing higher-level policy among development organizations, it was found that the grass-roots and participatory focus of UNV work is welcome by many partners.

80. However, the evaluations in UNV revealed limited involvement of stakeholders and communities in its planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring activities. The UNCDF model of promoting local development stresses the importance of involving stakeholders in situation and problem analysis in the project design in order to meet the needs of target groups and ensure ownership and sustainable results. However, the UNCDF evaluations found that in the absence of follow-up with adequate resources, 'planning fatigue' sets in and the communities lose interest in participating. The UNV and UNCDF evaluations found that greater attention is needed to ensure that women have a key voice and role in the process. Careful planning – including of exit strategies – based on thorough situation and stakeholder analysis, is necessary to make project achievements more sustainable.

D. Strengthening the substantive capacity of UNDP

81. Evaluations pointed out that UNDP needs to build its substantive capacity to provide upstream assistance at the country level. The assessments of development results noted that UNDP was able to manage projects well, yet its ability to live up to its recent transformation as a 'knowledge-networked' organization providing technical advice and other 'upstream' support was under constant challenge. In Rwanda, the Government found that the country office requires consistent substantive capacity to provide effective support, particularly in the area of environment, which was a national priority. UNDP Ecuador was unable to provide sustained support due to difficulties in maintaining institutional memory amidst rapid staff turnover.

82. The evaluations in UNV emphasized the need to enhance the use of monitoring and evaluation to learn from successes and generate examples of best practice, as well as to learn from mistakes and make adjustments accordingly. UNIFEM evaluations identified three main challenges in programming and implementation at the country level: the need for clearer and more realistic formulation of results and indicators; the mandate of being a catalyst and how to observe, describe, and track its effectiveness as a catalyst; and the difficulties of conflict and post-conflict situations, given lack of security, political instability and sometimes little political will to give priority to gender equality policies, constraining the achievement of outcomes.

III. Programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2008-2009

83. In developing the proposed programme of work, the Evaluation Office paid particular attention to inter-governmental decisions, including the triennial comprehensive policy review and decisions of the Executive Board. As requested by the Board, the programme is closely linked to the strategic plan to allow for its independent assessment at the end of the strategic plan period. The number of assessments of development results conducted at the end of the country programme cycle will be increased in a phased manner, in line with decision 2008/3. The analysis of evaluation priorities of other United Nations organizations, multilateral and bilateral agencies and partner governments, also informed the selection. Extensive consultations were held with relevant UNDP units and bureaux during the process.

84. Work on the following evaluations is ongoing as part of the approved programme of work: the evaluations of the third Global Cooperation Framework; managing environment and energy for sustainable development; the role and contribution of the United Nations system in South Africa; and 'delivering as one' pilots.

85. The proposed programme of work for 2008-2009 is as follows:

(a) Conduct 12 assessments of development results during 2008 (Afghanistan, Argentina, Barbados and Eastern Caribbean, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Guatemala, Iran, Philippines, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe); and 18 in 2009.

(b) Conduct evaluations of:

(i) Regional cooperation framework for Arab States (2006-2009);
(ii) The nexus between poverty and environment;
(iii) UNDP initiatives and approaches in strengthening national capacities;
(iv) UNDP engagement with global funds in the context of the evolving aid architecture;
(v) Decentralization and local governance;
(vi) UNDP contribution to electoral systems and processes;
(vii) UNDP contribution to strengthening national capacity to manage for development results;
(viii) UNDP regionalization policy; and
(ix) Inter-organization partnership agreements (joint evaluation).

(c) Strengthen the evaluation function by: providing guidance in evaluation methodology and management for programme units; building evaluation capacity among UNDP staff and national partners; managing the quality assurance system for decentralized evaluations; and hosting and managing the secretariat of UNEG.